



Council 4 AFSCME
Testimony before the Planning and Development Committee of the
Connecticut General Assembly
March 18, 2013

Senator Cassano, Representative Rojas, Members of the Planning and Development Committee. My name is Matthew Brokman, and I am a representative of Council 4 AFSCME. Our union represents 32,000 public and private sector workers across Connecticut.

I am here in support of the concept you have put forward in **HB 6629: An Act Concerning Regionalism in Connecticut**. Like much of the work of this Committee, this bill is an attempt to encourage municipalities to work better together to find efficiencies, while maintaining delivery of quality public services.

Council 4 represents about 17,000 municipal and Board of Education employees. These workers are on the front-lines of every facet of local government from public works to school nurses and from ensuring clean water to collection of taxes. Over the past several years, because of local budget cut backs, these workers have been forced to do more with less. Cuts to staffing levels or other resources have made performing the services we all rely on more difficult. To the extent that better coordination between municipalities can improve this situation, we welcome it.

It is our understanding that this legislation is subject to change depending on the recommendations of the M.O.R.E. Commission. With that in mind, we have one general proposal: that measures be put into place to ensure that any state grants that are awarded to regional entities not be misused to sideline labor agreements and cut wages.

Last year, the towns of East Lyme and Waterford looked to merge emergency service dispatchers. However, under the arrangement the three East Lyme dispatch workers would be laid off and then given the option to apply for their jobs in Waterford. There would be no guarantee that these long-term employees would be able to keep their jobs, their healthcare or retirement plans. Our union filed a labor board charge on this, and since then the towns have dropped their plans to move forward with the merger.

That's not the way this should happen. If there are benefits to merging services, our members want to be a part of the process of facilitating that. However, we should not be setting up these entities in a way where we lose the experience of dedicated public employees in the process. We look forward to working with this committee to ensuring that future efforts to take advantage of the benefits of regionalization go more smoothly by respecting all stakeholders.

I'd also like to take a moment to thank Speaker Brendan Sharkey for restarting the M.O.R.E. Commission. Council 4 staff are proud to represent our members on the subcommittees to make sure the Commission's recommendations are informed by front-line public employees as we move forward.